

Head Lice Hints

There are many alternative methods for treating head lice and nits (i.e. eggs) that are safe, non-toxic and inexpensive. There is no need to use chemical treatments if you choose not to. Here are some suggestions for other parents:

- One of the simplest methods is to completely cover the hair and scalp with thick conditioner (any type), leave it on for 5 or 10 minutes and then comb through with a fine tooth comb. This smothers the head lice and assists in egg removal.
- Soap is insecticidal, so soap or a soap-based shampoo may be effective. Shampoo hair thoroughly then rinse well. Shampoo again *but don't rinse*. Wrap hair in towel for 5 or 10 minutes, then comb with a fine tooth comb to remove dead lice and nits. Then rinse off.
- Coconut oil, olive oil or soaps and shampoos that contain these are effective treatments.
- Tea tree oil added to shampoo/conditioner is a good preventative treatment.
- Neem oil (available from health food stores) is also a good preventative as it stops the eggs hatching. It can be added to shampoo/conditioner and it is also available in a spray that is used on dry hair, Several families at The Patch School have found this very effective.
- At the risk of smelling like a pickle, another alternative treatment is vinegar. The idea is to wet the hair and scalp thoroughly with vinegar at bedtime (protecting the eyes carefully) then wrap the hair in a vinegar-soaked towel and leave on overnight. The eggs should detach when hair is shampooed in the morning.
- Wash hair in unsweetened orange juice. This kills the lice and makes nits easier to remove.

No matter what treatment you decide to use, it is important to re-treat the hair within 5 – 7 days to ensure that all the eggs are removed. Hair should be checked at least weekly (if not daily) at home using a good light source until no lice or eggs remain. It doesn't take long if you do it often. If you find nothing seems to be working, talk to other parents at school because someone might have another method that may work for you.

REMEMBER: no product or method will kill all nits (eggs) so ALL nits MUST removed by hand from hair.